महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

BOOK 16

THE COMPLETE
MAUSALA PARVA

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Mausala Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad IV : 6

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महाभारत

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK SIXTEEN

The Complete Mausala Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. St. Xavier's Lifetime Professor of Excellence award, 2005. Conferred Doctorate of Literature by University of Calcutta in 2006 for "literary scholarship, specially the seminal English transcreation of the Mahābhārata." Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lāl began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 350 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

Preface

The Mausala Parva can satisfactorily be translated us "The Mace-Massacre Parva". It is an excellent parva to find meaning in, specially in terrible times like ours when phrases like "disproportionate reaction" and "collateral damage" gain large-font media display. The serial blasts in Mumbai trains, the destruction of the twin New York trade towers by terrorists using hijacked planes as suicide missiles, the Israeli strikes in Lebanon's Hezbullah camps, the gunning down by Naxalites of trapped tribals in Chattisgarh – these are vivid in recent historical memory. Another variety of collateral and disproportionate horror arrives without human request or instigation: the erupting volcanoes, the unpredictable tsunamis, the fault-line earthquakes . . .

In what way are these apparently inexplicable happenings linked to human karma? Or is there a connection at all? This is the problem with which Arjuna (the listener, the reader of the *Mahābhārata*) confronts Vyāsa (the onlie begetter of the mahā-kāvya). Humanity questioning Divinity. Nara challenging Nārāyaṇa. Answer me – or face the consequences. What happens to Divinity if Humanity refuses to believe in Divinity?What happens to the mahā of the Bhārata if no one listens to the epic?

Both Vasudeva and Arjuna ask the same question. Vasudeva is bewildered because he cannot understand how the All-Powerful Vasudeva-Krishna, his son, failed to prevent the Vṛṣṇi genocide. Arjuna is depressed because his loved-and-loving *sakhā* (who has declared, "I am Arjuna, and Arjuna is me") has died and left him, and did nothing to prevent the slaughter of his own kith and kin, the Vṛṣṇis. Why did Krishna have to be charioteer when he could easily have been the *cakra*-and-mace-wielding Śārṅga-bow-brandishing invincible warrior?

Vyāsa's answer is simple, straight and profoundly disturbing. It is karma, he says. He goes to the heart of every Hindu's deepest instinctive and genetic religious belief. It's mathematical cause and effect. We may not know it, but there is no disproportion (as in Greek tragedly, where the hero suffers what looks like the most grievous injustice – "By heavens, the Jew has been

wronged!") or collateral consequence. Everything is part, says Vyāsa, of either human or cosmic plan. It's either Gāndhārī's curse (or the Brahmins' curse for Sāmba's mischief-making) or the will of the gods. There is no excess of any kind. Śakuntalā, in love, forgets to be hospitable to Durvāsas; so she will be forgotten by Duṣyanta, in love. Krishna could have prevented the Kuruksetra carnage, but he did not; so, thirtysix years later, according to Gāndhārī's curse, his own race will be wiped out in suicidal genocide, as hers was. Durvāsas does not curse Śakuntalā; she curses herself. Gāndhārī does not curse Krishna; Krishna apparently curses himself.

Karma is ruth-less, in the first meaning of ruth, which is gentleness, sweetness, compassion. Karma is not callous; it is unsentimental. The laws of nature do not forgive; they operate. They grind slow, and very small. What about the laws of morality? Is the quality of mercy strained or not? Is it indeed twice blessed? Do humans really forgive, or do they merely pretend to? In forgiveness a pretty form of self-congratulating spiritual superiority? Has any author ever "forgiven" a nasty review of a first book? Do we ever forget, let alone forgive, ugly words said about us?

Vyāsa does not say. He leaves it to us to think out his world-view. "The root of all," he says, "is Cosmic Time Kāla. Cosmic Time Kāla is the seed of the universe." Another way of spelling Kāla is k-a-r-m-a.

The finest symbol to explain this is, of course, the white-horsed chariot of Śvetavāhana-Arjuna. On Kurukṣetra, life's battleground, the chariot is one's body. The horses are the senses. The charioteer is Krishna, the divine in us, guiding, counselling. But Arjuna is the master. Krishna will take the chariot where Arjuna orders. Krishna clarifies and inspires, Arjuna decides. Arjuna must accept the responsibility. He cannot pass the buck to God, Fate, Education, Society, History, Mother-in-law. Karma is not transferrable.



Kolkata
December 2006

Dedication

One more time
to
KEWLIAN SIO
my supremely gentle student
in St Xavier's College in the 1950's
and
a Chinese-Sikkimese Catholic
of Bowbazar Street in Calcutta
whose exemplary character
of humility and innocence
I have always respected
as a stirrer of my conscience
in times of moral trouble
both private and public

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa.
We namaskāra Nara
We namaskāra Narottama
We namaskāra Sarasvatī devī
We namaskāra Vyāsa
We utter the word Jaya!
We namaskāra Divinity
We namaskāra Humanity
We namaskāra Divinity-in-Humanity
We namaskāra the goddess of wisdom
We namaskāra Vyāsa
We hope for victory and success!

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम्
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत

SECTION ONE

1 O delighter-of-the-Kauravas!
(said Vaiśampāyana),
The thirtysixth year after the battle
witnessed many abnormal omens.

2 Dry, fierce winds began blowing,
scattering rocky dust.
Birds wheeled in maṇḍala-flights
from right to left.

3 The mahā-rivers reversed direction.
Fog obscured the horizon.
Meteors plunged from the sky,
littering the earth with blazzing embers.

4 The sun's maṇḍala, O rājā,
was shrouded with dust.
Headless human bodies glowed weakly
in the pale light of dawn.

5 Three fearful rings of light surrounded
the sun and the moon.
Black-edged, ash-centred,
dawn-pink coloured.

6 These and many other ominous signs,
O rājā,
darkened the hearts of people
with fear and foreboding.

7 Soon after this,
the Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
received news of the slaughter
of the Vṛṣṇis with clubs.

8 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
informed that only Vasudeva
and Balarāma had escaped death,
consulted with his brothers.

9 They met, and great was their grief
when they learnt
that the Vṛṣṇis had been wiped out
through the power
of the Brahmins' rod of punishment,
the *daṇḍa-bala.*

10 The heroes refused to believe
that Vāsudeva-Krishna was dead.
It was like the drying-up
of an entire ocean.
How could *he* have died –
the wielder of the Śārṅga-bow?

11 The news of the iron clubs
engulfed them in grief and despair.
The Pāṇḍavas slumped down
in a state of utter dejection.

12 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!" asked Janamejaya.
"How did this happen –
the mutual slaughter
of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
before the very eyes
of Vāsudeva-Krishna?"

13 It was during the thirtysixth year
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
that this slaughter
of the Vṛṣṇis took place.
Impelled by Kāla, they butchered
each other with iron clubs.

14 "O finest of the twice-born,"
asked Janamejaya,
"who cursed the Vṛṣṇi heroes,
the Andhakas and Bhojas
to commit this genocide?
Tell me – everything."

15 Vaiśampāyana said: It happened the day
the Vṛṣṇi heroes,
led by Sāraṇa, saw tapasyā-rich Nārada
and Kaṇva in Dvārakā.

16 Victims of the rod of punishment
ordained by fute,
they disguised Sāmba as a girl
and said to them:

17 "O ṛṣis! This is the wife
of illimitably energetic Babhru.
She wants to have a son.
Can you tell who will be born to her?"

18 O rājā! O ruler of men!
Let me tell you
what the tricked munis
replied to the boys:

19 "This male heir of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
whose name is Sāmba,
will give birth to a gruesome iron club
to destroy the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas.

20 You cruel wicked scoundrels!
Maddened with pride,
you will, with that iron club,
slaughter your race
with the exception of Balarāma
and Janārdana-Krishna.

21 Plough-weaponed Śrīmān Halāyudha-Balarāma
will enter the ocean
after discarding his body,
and a hunter named Jarā
will pierce mahātmā Krishna
relaxing on the ground."

22 The eyes of the deceived munis, O rājā,
burned with wrath
as they glared at each other
and uttered this curse.

23 And after the pronouncement,
they went to Keśava-Krishna.
Madhūsudana-Krishna summoned the Vṛṣṇis
and said to them:

24 "What they have predicted,
will take place."
He knew what would happen.
Stating the inevitable,
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna entered
his mansion.

25 The *Prabhu*-lord of the universe
did not want it otherwise.
Indeed, the very next day
Sāmba gave birth to an iron club –

26 The very same club that massacred
the Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka males –
a mahā-messenger of death
for the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas.

27 The dreadful curse-created iron club
was reported to rājā Ugrasena.
Alarmed and agitated, he ordered
the club be ground to fine powder.

28 Then, O king, he ordered the powder
to be dissolved in the sea.
On orders proclaimed in the city,
given by Āhuka-Ugrasena,

29 Janārdana-Krishna, Balarāma,
and mahātmā Babhru,
it was decreed that from that day,
all Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas

30 Were forbidden to make wines
and other intoxicating liquors.
If anyone was found secretly
involved in wine-making,

31 He and his entire family
would be sentenced
to live impalement at the stake.
Fear of the rājā,
and because it was the command
of Balarāma of impeccable karma,
all the citizens obeyed,
and wine-making ceased.

SECTION TWO

1 The Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
went about their plans,
and Cosmic Time Kāla continued
his daily search
of the houses where they lived
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 Deformed body
Loathsome-looking
Pitch-black-reddish complexion –
The Vṛṣṇis saw him
off and on
sneaking in and peering
inside their homes.

3 They were mahā-bowmen –
they fired hundreds of thousands
of arrows at him –
but who can kill
Kāla
the Cosmic Killer of all?

4 Every day mahā-storms raged,
every day horripilating omens
foreboded the doom
of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas.

5 Rats infested the public roads,
clay pots cracked mysteriously.
At night rats nibbled
at the nails and hair of sleepers.

Transcreated by P. Lal

6 *Sārikā*-birds cackled
inside the homes of Vṛṣṇis.
Day and night they cackled,
with no respite.

7 *Sārasa*-cranes hooted like owls,
O Bharata,
and goats howled
like jackals.

8 Impelled by Kāla,
white-feathered pigeons
with bright-red legs
strutted inside Vṛṣṇi homes.

9 Cows gave birth to asses,
mules to elephants,
bitches to kittens,
and mongoose to mice.

10 And the Vṛṣṇis perpetrated crimes,
shamelessly.
They mocked Brahmins
and *pitṛs* and gods.

11 They insulted gurus and elders.
Balarāma and Janārdana-Krishna
behaved differently.
Wives cheated on husbands,
and husbands
cheated on wives.

12 Fires, when lit,
swerved to the left.
Sometimes the flames
flared blue and red.

13 Rising and setting in the city,
the sun
was shrouded
with headless human bodies.

14 And in kitchens, O Bharata,
clean, excellently cooked food,
at the time of serving,
swarmed with wriggling worms.

15 The noise of invisible feet
scampering about marred the sanctity
at the time of sacred *puṇyāha-vācana*
and japa-meditation.

16 Constellations crossed each other,
and crossed planets, repeatedly.
No Yādava could locate
the constellation of his birth.

17 And when the auspicious conch Pāñcajanya
of Krishna was blown,
Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka houses resounded
with the rancous braying of donkeys.

18 Observing these signs of calamitous Kāla,
and seeing the *amāvāsya*
coinciding with the thirteenth lunar change,
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna advised everyone:

19 "Rāhu has made the *caturdaśī*
fourteenth lunar change
the *amāvāsya* dark fortnight.
This happened earlier
at the time of the all-destroying
war of the Bharatas.

20 The slayer-of-Keśi Keśi-sūdana
and the punisher-of-people
Janārdana-Krishna
interpreted the omens
to signify Kāla's warning
of the thirtysixth year.

21 "Ravaged by grief over the deaths
of her sons and relatives,
Gāndhārī had predicted
what is now taking place.

22 What is hapeening now
is exactly what Yudhiṣṭhira saw
during the fearful confrontation
of the warring armies."

[XVI:2:23-24; 3:1-5]

23 Saying this, foe-smiting Vāsudeva-Krishna,
to fulfil Gāndhārī's prediction,
advised them to proceed
on a *tīrtha-yātrā* pilgrimage.

24 Messengers went out to proclaim
Keśava-Krishna's order
that the bull-brave Yādavas embark
on a seacoast *tīrtha-yātrā*.

SECTION THREE

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1 That was the time (continued Vaiśampāyana)
when the Dvārakā ladies dreamt
of a grinning black-skinned
and white-toothed female Kālī
who slunk into theri homes and snatched
their auspicious wrist-threads.

2 The men dreamt of horrendous vultures
swooping insdie the *agnihotṛ*-rooms
of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
and devouring the occupants.

3 And the grisliest of rākṣasas
snatched their ornaments,
umbrellas, war-flags and armour,
and fled.

4 Before the very eyes
of all the Vṛṣṇis,
Krishna's Agni-gifted adamantine *cakra*
vanished in the sky.

5 And Dāruka saw
the sun-radiant chariot,
magnificently equipped,
of Krishna, dragged away
by its own yoked horses –
four mind-swift steeds
sweeping the vehicle
inexorably
on the waves of the sea.

6 And the mahā-war-flags
of Rāma-Balarāma
and Janārdana-Krishna,
symbolled with the palm-tree
and Suparṇa-Garuḍa,
and pūjā-respected,
were removed by apsarās
who announced to all
day and night:
"It is time! It is time!
It is time to go
on the *tīrtha-yātrā.*"

7 The bull-brave Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka
maha-chariot-heroes
decided then to undertake the pilgrimage
with their families.

8 They prepared stocks
of food and drink
and many varieties of meat
and other edibles.

9 Then they set out of the city,
the splendedly-attired warriors
of illimitable energy,
on chariots and horses and elephants.

10 The Yādavas and their wives,
with ample provisions
of food and drink,
camped around Prabhāsa.

11 Learning of their arrival of the heroes
on the sea-coast,
wise-in the-ways-of-the-world
and yoga-dedicated Uddhava
approached them,
and left, taking their permission.

12 Mahātmā Uddhava offered *añjali*
to Krishna, and took leave,
and Krishna made no effort
to prevent him,
because he knew of the doom
that awaited the Vṛṣṇis.

13 Captives of Kāla, the Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka
mahā-chariot-heroes
witnessed the ascent of Uddhava
in a blaze of glory.

14 Pouring wine in the food
prepared for mahātmā Brahmins,
the Yādavas fed the wine-flavoured dishes
to *vānara*-monkeys.

15 Then those heroes of illimitable energy
surrendered themselves
to a mahā-orgy of feasting
at Prabhāsa –
hundreds of *tūrya*-trumpets blaring,
dancing and acting galore.

16 Sitting next to Krishna,
Balarāma, Kṛtavarman,
Yuyudhāna-Satyaki, Gada and Babhru
started drinking.

17 Intoxicated, Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
started laughing
and even insulted Kṛtavarman,
saying:

18 "Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman!
What kind of Kṣatriya
lets loose his weapons
on sleeping defenceless enemies
who pose no threat?
You are a criminal.
The Yadavas will never forgive
what you have done."

19 The taunt of Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
excited finest-of-chariot-heroes Pradyumna.
He praised Sātyaki,
and made fun of Kṛtavarman.

20 Kṛtavarman was furious,
and made no secret of his anger,
for he impudently pointed
a finger of his left hand at Sātyaki,

21 Muttering, "A hero you are –
butchering in cold blood
armless Bhūriśravas as he sat
in his *prāya*-fast to the death!"

22 Destroyer-of-enemy-heroes
Keśava-Krishna heard this,
and glanced sideways angrily
at Kṛtavarman.

23 Sātyaki turned to Madhusūdana-Krishna
and told him all
about the way greedy Kṛtavarman
was responsible
for killing Satrajit
over the Syamantaka gem.

24 Satyabhāmā heard Sātyaki
and burst into angry tears.
She sat in Keśava-Krishna's lap,
and instigated Janārdana-Krishna.

25 Flaming with anger,
Sātyaki shouted:
"Draupadī's five sons,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Śikhaṇḍin –

26 Who were slaughtered in their sleep
by this ill-ātmaned scoundrel –
I swear by truth
I will make him follow them –

27 This criminal called Kṛtavarman
who did all this
with the help of Droṇa's son.
O slim-waisted Satyabhāmā!
I will put an end today
to Kṛtavarman's life and fame!"

28 He finished saying this,
and he sprang up
from where he was sitting
next to Keśava-Krishna,
and with his sword
angrily decapitated Kṛtavarman.

29 He rushed about,
slaughtering everyone within reach.
Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna tried desperately
to stop him.

30 Mahārāja! That was when
the Bhojas and Andhakas,
captives of Cosmic Time Kāla,
rose up, as it were,
as one man,
and surrounded Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki.

31 Mahā-radiant Janārdana-Krishna
saw them encircle Sātaki,
but he knew the call of Kāla
and remained unperturbed and aloof.

32 Impelled by Kāla-dharma,
dazed and drowsy with drink,
they battered Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki's head
with their defiled pots and plates.

33 Unable to endure the assault
on Śini's grandson Sātyaki,
Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna
angrily confronted the attackers.

34 He challenged the Bhojas,
and Sātyaki grappled with the Andhakas.
Both the magnificently muscled heroes
displayed commendable valour.

35 But the odds were against them,
and both were killed
in the very presence of Krishna.
Seeing Śini's grandson
and his own son killed,
delighter-of-the-Yādavas

36 Keśava-Krishna, in a fit of anger,
plucked a fistful of *eraka*-grass,
which was suddenly transformed
into a fierce thunderbolt-like club.

37 With it, Krishna killed all
who confronted him.
The Andhakas and Bhojas,
the Śinis and Vṛṣṇis,

38 Victims of the call of Kāla,
clubbed each other to death.
Whoever among them, O king,
angrily picked up *eraka* gras-blades

39 Found them transformed, O radiant rājā,
into thunderbolts.
A single blade became
a murdering club –

40 All this, O earth-lord,
the punishment of the Brahmins' curse.
Every blade of grass, O rājā,
pierced even impenetrable armour;

41 Every blade of grass became
an invincible adamantine thunderbolt,
father killing son with it,
and son, O Bharata, killing father.

42 Demented with drink,
the warriors butchered other –
the Kukuras and the Andhakas –
falling like fleas in a flame.

43 Not one of them had the good sense
to flee the carnage.
Aware of the call of Kāla,
mahā-muscled

[XVI:3:44-47; 4:1]

Transcreated by P. Lal

44 Madhusūdana-Krishna stood indifferently by,
holding the iron club.
But when Mādhava-Krishna saw
Sāmba and Cārudeṣṇa killed,

45 And Pradyumna and Aniruddha –
then, O Bhārata,
his fury flamed forth,
fomented even further
when he saw sprawled dead
his brother Gada.

46 Śārṅga-cakra-and-mace-wielding
Śārṅga-cakra-gadādhara-Krishna
slaughtered the entire clan.
Witnesing that butchery,
destroyer-of-hostile-cities
mahā-energetic Babhru

47 And Dāruka then said
to Dāśāhra-Krishna:
"*Bhagavan*! Revered one!
They are all dead.
Where has Balarāma gone?
We want to be with him."

SECTION FOUR

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Then Dāruka and Babhru
and Keśava-Krishna
left and met Balarāma,
the valiant hero,
sitting under a tree,
in a relaxed pusture,
lost in thought,
all by himself.

2 As soon as they spotted
mahā-thoughtful Balarāma,
Krishna ordered Dāruka:
"Proceed immediately
to the Kauravas
and inform Pārtha-Arjuna
of the mahā-self-slaughter
of the Yādavas, and tell him
to come here quickly

3 As soon as he learns
of the curse of the Brahmins
on the doomed Yādavas."
Bewildered Dāruka
sped the chariot
to the Kaurava capital.

4 After Dāruka had left,
Keśava-Krishna said
to Babhru waiting on him:
"Protect the women.
The fear is from robbers
tempted by their jewellery."

5 Ordered by Keśava-Krishna,
wine-flushed Babhru agreed,
but he was ill at ease.
His mind was troubled
by the indiscriminate slaughter
of his friends and kinsmen.
For a while he stayed back,
he lingered by the side
of Keśava-Krishna.

6 But he had not gone far
when the mahā-mace,
under the influence
of the curse of the Brahmins,
attached itself
to a hunter's bow
and suddenly struck him,
killing him instantly.
Seeing Babhru slain,
in front of his eyes,
radiant Krishna said
to his elder brother Balarāma:

7 "Wait for me here,
Balarāma, while I ensure
the safety of the ladies
among our kinsmen."
Entering Dvārakā, Janārdana-
Krishna said to his father:

8 "Arrange for the protection
of the ladies till the time
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna arrives.
I am going to meet
Balarāma who is waiting
for me near the forest.

9 I have witnessed the slaughter
of the Yādavas today
as I witnessed the slaughter
of the bull-brave Kauravas.
I have no desire to live
in a Yādava-less city.

10 I will go to the forest
and there practise tapasyā
with Balarāma."
Krishna touched the feet
of his father with his head,
and quickly left.

11 Mahā-loud the lamentation
of the women and children –
so much so that Keśava-
Krishna retraced his steps
and, consoling the ladies,
he said:

12 "Ambidexterous Savyaśacī-
Arjuna is coming here
He will remove your grief."
Keśava-Krishna left,
and saw Balarāma
alone in the forest.

13 Krishna saw Balarāma
yoked-to-yoga
from whose mouth issued
a white mahā-serpent,
a mahā-minded nāga
slithering to the mahā-ocean –

14 Thousand-headed,
mountain-huge,
blood-red-complexioned,
emerging from the body,
proceeding to the ocean;
and the ocean itself
and the rivers, and the hosts
of celestial nāgas
received him with reverence.

15 Karkoṭaka and Vāsuki,
Takṣaka and Pṛthuśravas,
Aruṇa and Kuñjara,
Miśrī and Śaṅkha,
Kumuda, Puṇḍarīka,
Naga mahātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

16 Hrāda and Krātha,
fierce-energied Śitikaṇṭha
Cakramanda, Atiṣaṇḍa
Nāga-śreṣtha Durmukha,
Ambarīṣa and O rājā,
rājā Varuṇa himself

[XVI:4:17-20]

Transcreated by P. Lal

17 They welcomed the serpent
with *arghya*-offerings
and pūjā-reverence.
After his brother had gone,
divine-visioned, all-knowing
Vāsudeva-Krishna

18 Roamed for a while
in the secluded forest,
lost in thought.
Supremely radiant Krishna
sat down on the bare ground.
First, he recalled
all that had happened
as a result of the curse
cast by Gāndhārī.

19 Then he recalled
the words of Durvāsas
spoken when the body
of Durvāsas was smeared
with defiled *pāyasa*-curd.
Mahā-sensitive Krishna
also recalled the doom
of the Kaurava dynasty
and the Andhakas and Vṛṣṇis.

20 Because he had in mind
the welfare of the three worlds,
and because he desired
that the words of the son
of Ātri, Durvāsas,
should be fulfilled
(that Krishna would die
when a hunter's arrow
pierced his foot-sole),
and because he accepted
the call of Kāla,
Krishna controlled his senses.

21 Deva-Divinity Krishna,
wise in the ways
of the wayward world,
decided to free himself
from his flesh-frame,
and controlling his senses,
his speech and his mind,
he experienced the bliss
of mahā-yoga.

22 Yoked-to-yoga
Keśava-Krishna
lay serene and still
when a hunter Jarā
mistook him for a deer
and shot an arrow

23 That pierced Krishna's heel,
and rushed to the spot
to claim his prey.
He saw a multi-armed man,
dressed in ochre robe,
yoga-*yukta*, rapt-in-yoga.

24 Jarā shuddered with fear
at the crime he had committed.
He clasped Krishna's feet.
Mahātmā Krishna consoled him,
and rose to the sky,
blazing with glory.

25 In the realm of heaven,
he was received and welcomed
by Vāsava-Indra,
and the twin Aśvins,
and Rudra-Śiva,
the Vasus and Viśvadevas,
the munis and Siddhas,
the chief gandharvas
and all the apsarās.

26 Then, O rājā, the mahātmā,
the incalculably radiant
Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa,
Creator and Destroyer
of all there is –
the resplendently auspicious
Yoga-ācārya
arrived in his own
immeasurable region.

27 Krishna met the gods,
O rājā, and the ṛṣis,
the Cāraṇas and gandharvas,
enchanting apsarās,
Siddhas and Sādhyas,
and received their pūjā-respect.

28 The gods honoured him,
as did the finest of munis,
O rājā, with Ṛgveda chants.
The gandharvas extolled him,
and Puruhūta-Indra
welcomed him.

SECTION FIVE

1 In the meantime (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Dāruka went to the Kaurava kingdom
where he met Pṛthā-Kuntī's sons
and informed the mahā-chariot-heroes
of the mutual suicide with clubs
of the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas.

2 Great was the grief and horror
of the Pāṇḍavas
when they learnt of the slaughter
of Vṛṣṇis, Bhojas, Andhakas and Kukuras.

3 The loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
of Keśava-Krishna,
Arjuna went with his brothers' permission
to meet his maternal uncle,
exclaiming as he left:
"How could this happen?"

4 *Prabhu*! Lord!
When he entered the city
in the company of Dāruka,
the capital of the Vṛṣṇis
looked to the hero
like a bereaved wife.

5 The ladies who earlier had as lord
the World-Protector himself
now had none to protect them
Seeing Pārtha-Arjuna
coming to protect them,
they burst into lamentation –

6 All sixteen thousand wives
of Vāsudeva-Krishna.
The very sight of Arjuna
produced their mahā-moaning.

7 As for Kaurava Arjuna –
tears filmed his eyes
when he saw those helpless wives
deprived of Krishna.

8 Dvārakā the river
Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas its waters
houses its fish
chariots its boats
musical instruments and chariot-rattle
its ripples and waves
tīrthas and mahā-lakes
its mansions

9 Gems and jewels its moss
vajra-walls its flower-garlands
streets and roads its swirling currents
cross-roads its square lakes

[XVI:5:10-15; 6:1]

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10 Balarāma and Krishna
Dvārakā's two mahā-crocodiles –
indeed, like the noose of Kāla
was this horrific Vaitariṇī river –

11 So it appeared to wise Arjuna,
Vāsava-Indra's son,
when he saw desolate Dvārakā
without the presences
of its two bull-brave Vṛṣṇi heroes,
faded and forlorn
like a lovely lotus
dried up in winter time.

12 Seeing Dvārakā desolate
and Krishna's wives agonising,
Pārtha-Arjuna burst into tears
and fell down in a faint.

13 O lord of the world!
Satrajit's daughter Satyabhāmā
and Rukmiṇī sat down weeping
beside Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

14 Slowly they helped Arjuna
to lie down on a golden seat.
Then, without saying a word,
they sat beside him.

15 Pāṇḍava-Arjuna extolled to them
the glory of Govinda-Krishna.
Then all of them went
to meet their maternal uncle.

SECTION SIX

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Bull-brave Kaurava Arjuna entered
the abode of his uncle and saw
mahātmā-Anakadundubhi-Vasudeva
prostrate on the ground
mourning the deaths of his sons.

2 O Bharata descendant!
Even more grief-oppressed
than his maternal uncle,
broad-chested mahā-armed Arjuna,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son,
touched the feet of Anakadundubhi.

3 O vanquisher of foes!
Mahā-muscled Anakadundubhi-Vasudeva
wanted to smell the head
of his sister's son, but could not do so.

4 Aging strong-armed Vasudeva
embraced Arjuna with both arms,
and wept uncontrollably,
for he remembered all his sons,

5 Brothers, grandsons,
daughter's sons, and friends.
Vasudeva said:
"They defeated Daityas
and lords of the earth
hundreds of times, Arjuna,

6 Both of them –
it was their misdeed, Pārtha,
that led to the destruction
of the Vṛṣṇis.

7 Both of them –
it was their misdeed, Pārtha,
that led to the destruction
of the Vṛṣṇis.
They were respected
as Vṛṣṇi super-chariot-heroes,

8 Pradyumna and Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki,
extolled by everyone,
and who, O tiger-brave Kaurava-Arjuna,
were dearly loved by Krishna, –

9 They are the ones, Dhanañjaya,
responsible for the Vṛṣṇis' genocide.
But why do I blame Śaini-Sātyaki,
Arjuna, why blame Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman,

10 Why blame Rukmiṇī's son Pradyumna,
why blame Akrūra?
It was the curse of the ṛṣis
that led to the self-slaughter.
The lord of the worlds,
the Jagat-prabhu
who displayed his valour
against Keśin and Kaṁsa

11 By stripping them of their bodies,
and he, Pārtha-Arjuna,
who humbled the pride
of the Cedi-ruler Śiśupāla,
and the Niṣāda Ekalavya,
the Kaliṅgas and Magadhas,

12 The Gāndhāras, the Kāśi-rājā,
the desert earth-lords,
the kings of the east and the south
and the mountains regions –

13 How could that Krishna,
slayer-of-Madhu Madhusūdana –
how could he remain nconcerned
during all this carnage?
You, Nārada, and the *munis*
know him as the Sanātāna

14 Eternal, defectless Govinda,
the undeteriorating Deity
Acyuta-deva, Adhokṣaja-Krishna
the Sustainer of the Universe.
And he stood by, witnessing
the extinction of his race!

15 O foe-annihilating Arjuna!
My son stood by,
and allowed all this to happen.
The words of Gāndhārī and the ṛṣis –

16 The lord of the universe,
the Jagat-Prabhu
did not want them nullified.
O foe-annihilating Arjuna!
Before your very eyes,
your grandson Parīkṣit

17 Was killed by Aśvatthāman,
and revived by Krishna's energy.
But your loved-and-loving
sakhā-friend Krishna
made no effort to save
his own kith and kin.

18 He saw his sons and grandsons
and brothers nd *sakhīs*
sprawled dead on the earth,
and all he said to me was:

19 'O bull-brave father!
It's doom-time today
for the family.
Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
will be arriving
in Dvāravatī today.

20 Tell him what has happened –
this Vṛṣṇi mahā-genocide.
Prabhu-lord! The instant he hears
of the Yādava carnage, mahā-energetic

21 Arjuna will rush here;
I am sure of that.
Keep in mind: I am Arjuna,
and Arjuna is me.

22 O Mādhava! Remember this well –
you must do whatever he says.
Pāṇḍava Arjuna will do what is best
for the women and children.

23 Dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
will perform your *aurdhva-dehika* funeral rites.
AfterDhanañjaya-Arjuna
leaves the city,

24 Dvāravatī with all its ramparts
and walls and pillars
will sink under the ocean.
I will go to a sacred spot,

25 Passing a life of discipline there,
accompanied by wise Balarāma.'
Illimitably illustrious Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
said this to me,

26 And then he left me and the children,
and went away –
where I do not know.
Thinking of yor two mahātmā brothers

27 And of the fearsome killing
of our kith and kin,
I have stopped eating,
I am grief-stricken.
How fortunate I am, Pāṇḍava-Arjuna,
that you have come here!

28 O Pārtha-Arjuna!
May you succeed in doing
what Krishna wants done by you.
This kingdom, these women, these jewels,
O Pārtha-Arjuna –
they are now all yours.
O foe-destroyer! As for me,
I am giving up my life."

SECTION SEVEN

1 O foe-subduing monarch
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Deeply pained by the words
of his maternal uncle,
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
said to equally depressed Vasudeva:

2 "Uncle, impossible for me
to look at this earth
bereft of the valiant Vṛṣṇi warrior Krishna
and my other relatives.

3 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīmasena,
Pāṇḍava Sahadeva, Nakula
and Yājñasenī-Draupadī –
all six of us are one with me in this.

4 The time is now ripe also
for the departure of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
You are the finest of those
who know the ways of Kāla.

5 O foe-conqueror!
I will first arrange to escort
the Vṛṣṇi ladies, children and elders
to Indraprastha."

6 Then, turning to Dāruka,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna said:
"My priority now is to meet
the Vṛṣṇi ministers and courtiers."

7 Saying this, and still grieving
over the mahā-chariot-heroes,
heroic Arjuna entered
the Sudharmā sabhā of the Yādavas.

8 He sat down,
and all the citizens,
Brahmins, ministers and courtiers
gathered round him.

9 More inconsolable than they,
Pārtha-Arjuna
said to the desolated assembly
these appropriate words:

10 "This city is going to sink
under the ocean.
I will escort the Vṛṣṇis and Andhakas
to Śakraprastha-Indraprastha.

11 Get the chariots ready,
fill them with wealth and jewels.
Vajra will rule as rājā
of Śakraprastha-Indraprastha.

12 On the seventh day from today,
at crack of dawn, we start.
There is no time to waste.
Start preparing immediately."

13 Instructed by Pārtha-Arjuna
of stainless karma,
all of them started preparing
for a safe journey.

14 Pārtha-Arjuna passed that night
in Keśava-Krishna's palace.
A mahā-mournful gloom
descended upon him.

15 Next morning, yoking his ātman
with mahā-energy,
illustrious Śauri-Vāsudeva
attained life's highest goal.

16 And suddenly, from the palace
of Vasudeva
rose a wail of mahā-lamentation
from the bereaved ladies,

17 With dishevelled hair,
divested of ornaments,
deprived of garlands,
piteously beating their breasts.

18 Foremost among the ladies
were Devakī, Bhadrā, Rohiṇī and Mandirā,
who rushed out to immolate themselves
in the funeral pyre of their husband.

19 O Bharata descendant!
Pārtha-Arjuna had his uncle's body
borne on the shoulders of men
and placed in a magnificent carriage.

20 Behind the carriage
came the grief-stricken citizens
of Dvārakā
and the surrounding provinces.

21 In front of the vehicle
was held aloft the umbrella
that shaded his head
at the conclusion of the Aśvamedha,
and the *agnihotṛ* sacred fire
carried by the *yājaka* priests.

22 Following the dead hero
were his widows richly ornamented
and thousands of other women
and thousands of daughters-in-law.

23 The *pitṛ-medha* last rites
of mahātmā Vasudeva
were performed at the spot
that was most dear to him.

24 The four lovely-bodied wives
of Śura's valiant son Vasudeva
ascended the fneral pyre
and attained their husband's realm.

25 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
cremated the body of his uncle
and the four wives
with scented wood and perfumes.

26 The funeral pyre blazed high.
Loud lamentations were heard,
The crackle of firewood,
The chanting of songs from the Sāma Veda,
And the wails of the citizens,

27 And then the final water oblations
offered to mahātmā Vasudeva
by the young Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi boys,
headed by Vajra.

28 Careful in performing every karma,
Phālguna-Arjuna,
O bull-brave Bharata,
proceeded next
to the spot
of the Vṛṣṇis' self-slaughter.

29 Kaurava Arjuna saw them
all sprawled in death,
and grief again overpowered him.
He did what had to be done.

30 The last *kriyā* rites were performed
in order of seniority
for the dead heroes
killed by bolts of *eraka*-grass
created by the curse
cast by the Brahmins.

31 He instructed reliable persons
to locate and identify
the bodies of Balārama
and Vāsudeva-Krishna,
and had their last rites
performed specially.

32 Next Pāṇḍava Arjuna finished
the *preta-kārya* rites
on the seventh day,
and climbed into his chariot.

33 In carriages pulled by bullocks,
mules and camels,
in horse-driven chariots,
came the wailing Vṛṣṇi widows,

34 Behind Pāṇḍu's mahātmā son,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
The Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi servants,
and the horsemen,

35 And the citizens, the elders, the children,
bereft of their hero,
advised by Pārtha-Arjuna,
followed him.

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36 And warriors on elephant-backs
followed on hill-huge elephants,
as well as the foot-soldiers,
and the reinforcement ranks.

37 The Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi children
followed Pārtha-Arjuna.
Brahmins and Kṣatriyas,
Vaiśyas and mahā-wealthy Śūdras,

38 And the sixteen thousand wives
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
followed behind Vajra,
the grandson of wise Krishna.

39 The widows of the Andhakas,
Vṛṣṇis and Bhojas,
who followed behind Arjuna,
could be counted in crores.

40 Hostile-city-destroyer Pārtha-Arjuna,
finest of chariot-heroes,
escorted that wealthy ocean-vast procession
of Vṛṣṇi followers.

41 With the departure of the procession,
Dvārakā was submerged,
with all its countless opulence,
in the *makara*-infested ocean.

42 As soon as tiger-brave Arjuna
passed through a city section,
the teeming ocean waters
flooded in.

43 Marvelling at this phenomenon,
the citizens of Dvārakā
hurried to safety even faster,
murmuring, 'A wonderful fate!'

44 Leaving Dvārakā, Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
leading the Vṛṣṇi ladies,
arrived at a region of dense forest,
mountains and rivers.

[XVI:7:45-53]

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45 Wise and enterprising *prabhu* Arjuna
decided to set camp
in the corn-and-cattle-filled land
of the five rivers Pañcanada.

46 O Bharata descendant!
Seeing so many ladies
protected by a single leader,
ambitious local robbers,

47 Tempted, blinded by greed,
the ill-omened Ābhīras,
wicked-ātmaned scoundrels,
held a meeting.

48 They decided:
Only one bowman – Arjuna.
Old men and children.
Dispirited warriors.

49 Thousands of these robbers,
armed with maces,
attacked the Vṛṣṇi procession,
bent on loot and plunder.

50 Impelled by the call of Kāla,
they swept down,
terrorising everyone with lion-roars
and threats of murder.

51 Mahā-muscled Kaunteya-Arjuna
stopped, turned,
faced the robber band,
and said, smiling:

52 "You devotees of adharma!
If you value your lives, turn back!
I'll rip you apart
with my arrows!"

53 Warned by valiant Arjuna,
they ignored him.
He warned them again and again;
they did not listen.

54 Then Arjuna raised
his massive Gāṇḍīva bow,
his divine, indestructible weapon.
It was with difficulty he did so.

55 With considerable effort
he strung the bow.
He tried to summon his weapons,
but his mind failed him.

56 He felt utterly ashamed –
here, in a mahā-battle,
his muscular arm limp,
his divine mahā-weapons futile!

57 The Vṛṣṇi warriors,
the foot-soldiers and chariot-heroes
were unable to save the multitude
from the marauding robbers.

58 A long-sized procession!
The robbers attacked it
from many sides, and Pārtha-Arjuna
tried in vain to stop them.

59 Before the very eyes of the warriors,
the Vṛṣṇi women were raped;
some women voluntarily
went away with the robbers.

60 Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
with help from some Vṛṣṇi warriors,
desperately shot arrows at the robbers
from his Gāṇḍīva.

61 O rājā! All too soon,
his stock of arrows was exhausted.
Earlier, it self-replenished.
Now, there were none left.

62 Seeing his quiver exhausted,
Indra's son Pākaśāsani-Arjuna,
afflicted with gloom and grief,
flailed with the ends of his bow.

63 It was no use, O Janamejaya.
The Mleccha robbers left,
taking with them the loveliest
Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka ladies.

64 *Prabhu* Dhanañjaya-Arjuna thought:
Daiva! *Fāte! The will of the gods!*
He groaned with grief
and sighed heavily.

65 His divine weapons nullified,
his physical strength sapped,
his bow refusing to nock,
his inexhaustible quiver empty.

66 *What could all this be*
except the will of the gods?
O rājā! In frustration he said:
"All is uncertain. Nothing lasts."

67 Mahā-minded Arjuna
journeyed to Kurukṣetra,
escorting the surviving women
and the remaining valuables.

68 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
placed the surviving Vṛṣṇis
in whatever safe spots
were accessible.

69 Finest-of-men Pārtha-Arjuna
secured the city of Mārtikavata
for Hārdikya-Kṛtavarman's son
and the surviving Bhoja ladies.

70 Pāṇḍu's son Arjuna
gave refuge in Śakraprastha-Indraprastha
to the others – the hero-deprived
old men, children and women.

71 Sātyaki's dear son Yauyudhāni,
with old men, children and women,
was sheltered by dharmātmā Arjuna
on the banks of the Sarasvatī.

72 Slayer-of-heroic-foes Arjuna
established Vajra
as ruler of Indraprastha.
Despite Vajra's repeated pleading,
Akrūra's widows
retired to the forest.

73 Rukmiṇī, the Gāndhāra princess Śaibyā,
Haimavatī and Jāmbavatī devī
followed the tradition
and entered the Jātaveda funeral pyre.

74 Krishna's beloved Satyabhāmā
and other devīs
resolved to practise tapasyā, O rājā,
and retired to the forest.

75 And all who had followed
Pārtha-Arjuna from Dvārakā
were divided into groups
and entrusted to Vajra.

76 Have done what was required,
with tears streaming from his eyes,
Arjuna entered the āshram
of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa
where he had a darshan
of the seated ṛṣi.

SECTION EIGHT

1 Vaiśampāyana continued:
O rājā!
Arjuna saw Sātyavatī's son,
the truth-speaking muni Vyāsa
seated
in solitary aloneness.

2 He approached the mahā-vowed,
dharma-dedicated ṛṣi
and saying, "I am Arjuna,"
stood waiting respectfully.

3 Satyavatī's mahā-muni son
with a delighted ātman said,
"*Svāgata!* You are welcome,"
and added, "Be seated."

4 He noticed that Pārtha-Arjuna
kept breathing heavily,
and looked preoccupied and troubled.
Vyāsa said to him:

5 "Have you bathed with water
stained by someone's nail or hair
or the border of a dress,
poured from a defiled jar?
Have you had sex
with a menstruating partner?
Or are you guilty
of killing a Brahmin?

6 Have you lost a battle?
Has the goddess of prosperity Śrī
deserted you?
O bull-brave Bharata!
I know for certain
no one has defeated you.

7 Why this dejection, Pārtha-Arjuna?
Tell me what is wrong,
if you think you should –
and tell me quickly."
Arjuna replied:
"He who is cloud-handsome,
whose eyes are as large
as lotus-petals –

8 I mean Krishna –
he and Balarāma
have abandoned their bodies
and gone to heaven
His joyful nectar-sweet words,
his nectar-sweet touch –

9 I recall the *amṛta*-ambrosia
of the God-of-gods Deva-deva,
and I get ātman-depressed.
It was the curse of the Brahmins
that slaughtered the Vṛṣṇis
in the mace-massacre.

10 Not a single hero escaped
in that horripilating genocide.
Mahā-powerful, lion-proud,
mahātmā heroes –

11 Bhojas, Vṛṣṇis, Andhakas –
O Brahmin,
they butchered each other.
They had mace-thick arms
wielding clubs and *parigha*-lances
and *śakti*-spears,

12 And they exterminated each other
with blades of *eraka*-grass!
See, the callous call of Kāla!
Five hundred thousand brave warriors

13 Have perished, in an orgy
of mutual destruction.
Again and again
I am haunted
by the deaths
of those indomitable warriors.

14 I recall the deaths
of illustrious far-famed Krishna
and the hosts of Yādavas –
it is like an ocean drying up,
like fire cooling, like the sky falling,
like a mountain crumbling,

15 The very thought
that the Śārṅga-wielder
could perish the way he did –
incredible, undelievable!

[XVI:8:16-22]

Transcreated by P. Lal

16 Krishna has left me.
I do not wish to live
in a world without Krishna.
O you-who-are-rich-in-tapasyā!
Something even more painful haunts me –
let me speak it out to you.

17 The more I think of it,
the more I get agitated.
O Brahmin, in front of my very eyes
thousands of Vṛṣṇi ladies

18 Were abducted by the Ābhīras
in the land of the five rivers.
I picked up my bow,
and it failed me.

19 My arms were limp –
all their old energy gone.
O mahā-muni!
My vivid, varied weapons –
all of them
failed to function.

20 Then, my arrows –
all of them exhausted.
The Puruṣa of illimitable ātman,
the conch-*cakra*-mace wielder,

21 The ochre-robed, four-armed,
dark-blue-complexioned lotus-eyed one –
he is no more with me.
The more-than-mahā-radiant one,

22 That undeteriorating personality,
that obliterator of enemies
I no longer see with me.
He who consumed
hosts upon hosts of foes
with his dazzling glory –

23 Foes whom I exterminated
with arrows from my Gāṇḍīva –
him I do not see.
O finest of men!
That is the reason
my head is a maze of confusion.

24 I cannot think straight.
I have no peace of mind.
I do not want to live
in a world without my *prabhu*,
Devakī's son,
the unborn Divinity,
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Janārdana-Krishna.

25 The instant I heard
that Viṣṇu had left us,
my limbs failed me,
all became lost and empty,
I ran from here to there,
from nothing to nothing.

26 O finest of men! Advise me! Favour me!"
Vyāsa replied: "They were all aspects of Divinity.
They came with the God-of-gods Deva-deva
and they have gone away with him.

27 Dharma would have suffered
had they stayed back.
Divinity ordained that they perish
for the sake of dharma.

28 O tiger-brave Kaurava!
The Vṛṣṇi and Andhaka heroes
have perished as a result
of the Brahmins' curse.
So, do not grieve them.
It was ordained
that such would be the end
of all those mahātmās.

29 Krishna could have prevented the carnage,
but he preferred not to.
Lord-of-animate-and-inanimate-life
Govinda-Krishna
can alter whatever he likes
in the three worlds,
and he could easily have freed
the mahātmās from the curse.

30 The ladies were all apsarās
in a previous birth.
They had laughed at Aśṭāvakra *muni*,
and he cursed them,
and that is the cause
of your loss of strength.
And your charioteer was none other
than *cakra*-and-mace-wielder

31 Purāṇa-ṛṣi, four-armed
Vāsudeva-Krishna,
who has such affection for you.
Large lotus-eyed Krishna
has lightened the burden
of the earth,

32 And has cast off his body
and attained the supreme goal.
O bull-brave hero!
I realise your divine mission is over.

33 O mahā-armed one!
It has been accomplished
with help from Bhīma and the twins.
O bull-brave Kaurava!
I know your work
has been perfectly performed.

34 *Vibho*! O radiant one!
The time is now ripe
for your supreme departure.
O Bharata descendant!
Intelligence and energy
and foresight
co-exist when all goes well,
in times of prosperity.

35 When things do not go well,
these virtues deteriorate.
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
The root of all
is Cosmic Time Kāla.
Cosmic Time Kāla
is the seed
of the universe.

36 Kāla is the giver,
and Kāla is the taker.
That which is strong
is that which becomes weak.

37 He who rules
becomes he who is ruled.
Your weapons have served you well,
they go back now where they came from.

38 And, when the time is ripe,
in the fullness of Kāla,
you will get them again.
O Bharata!
The call of Kāla
is now upon you
to arise and achieve
the supreme perfection.

39 O bull-brave Bharata!
This is the best way for you."
With these words
(said Vaiśampāyana)
Vyāsa
of illimitable energy

40 Gave permission
to Pārtha-Arjuna
to return to Hastināpura.
Valiant Arjuna
hurried to meet Yudhiṣṭhira
and informed him
of all that had happened
to the Vṛṣṇis.

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttural		अ	आ
	a	ā	
Palatal		इ	ई
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttural-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttural-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttural	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvāra = ṁ

CONTENTS

CANTO XVI

Mausalaparva

The Chronicle of Destruction

Courtesy:

Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)

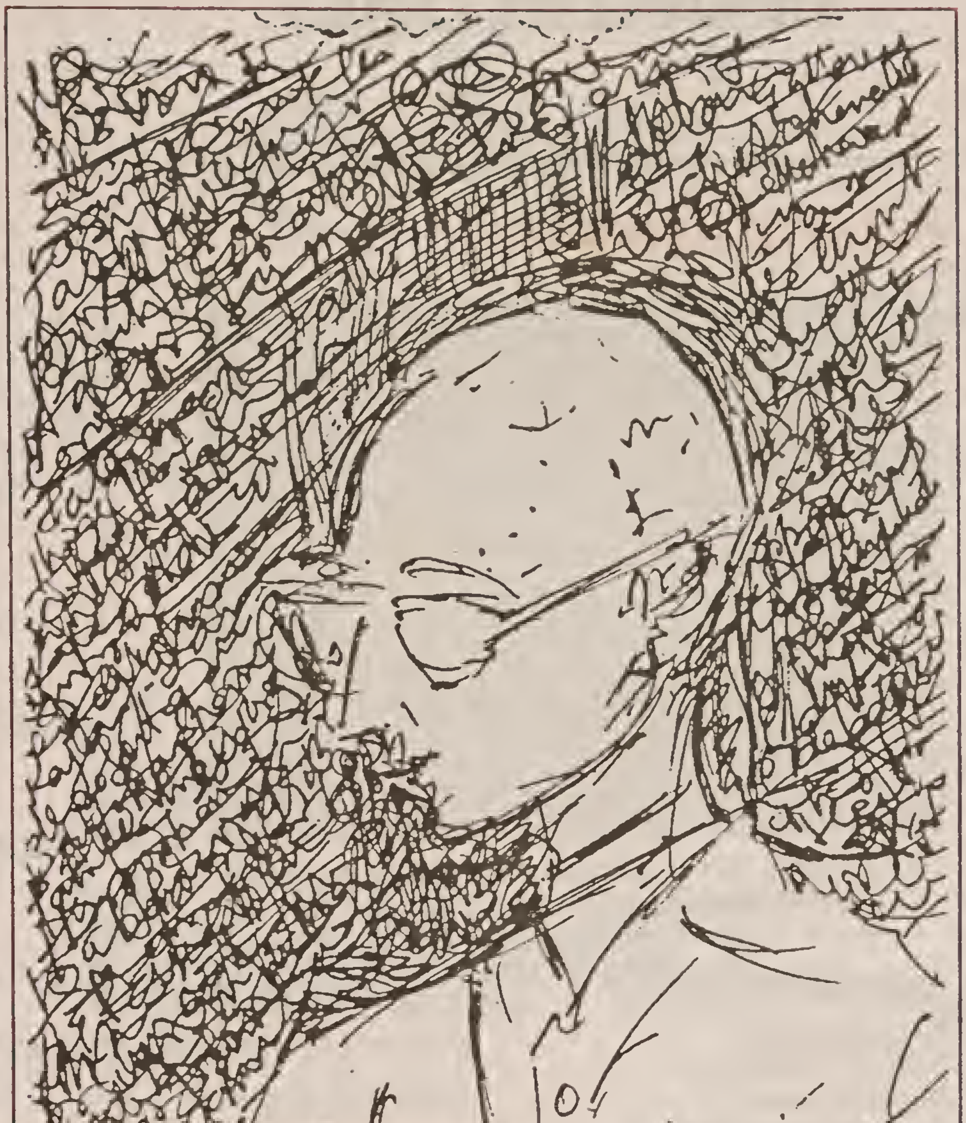
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Kathā Library

VYĀSA MAHĀBHĀRATĀ KATHĀ LIBRARY

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa is a cornucopious treasure house of stories. WRITERS WORKSHOP is bringing out a series of kathās from the mahā-epic, in the śloka-by-śloka English transcreation by P. Lāl. Each volume will carry a brief (around 800 words) synopsis of the tale and information about its protagonists. Most of the volumes will also have a preface by Pradip Bhattacharya (again brief, around 1,000 words) on the "deeper meaning" of each kathā, concerning its symbolism, myth and metaphoric interpretation. The Scaffolding and the Significance – in this two pronged presentation WRITERS WORKSHOP plans to explore, through Vyāsa's imagination and itihāsa-retelling, the riches of the ancient Indian tradition of Suta story-weaving. Story and history, tale and detail, vision and revision coalesce in this entertaining and illuminating journey through a civilisation that communicated lasting values and ideals by vivid oral means. All the volumes are scheduled for publication in 2007. Special Advance Subscription for all 12 volume: Rs 2400.

Writers Workshop • Indian Creative Writing in English •

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Email profsky@cal.vsnl.net.in
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P. Lāl reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kolkata Calendar



Sanjib Roy's works will be on display at Academy of Fine Arts till December 12

READING SESSION

GD Birla Sabhaghar
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to Dhritarashtra of Drona rendered unconscious by Dhristadyumna, recovering and defeating Dhristadyumna, and Satyaki of the Vrisnis forcing Duhsasana to retreat, in the 352nd weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyasa's complete *Mahabharata* presented by Sanskriti Sagar on December 10 at 11 am.

THE TELEGRAPH
CALCUTTA SATURDAY
9 DECEMBER 2006

READING

■ December 10 at G.D. Birla Sabhagar; 11 am: Professor P. Lal reads Sanjaya's report of Drona, rendered unconscious by Dhristadyumna, recovering and defeating him, and Satyaki forcing Duhsasana to retreat, in the 352nd weekly session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

The Sunday Statesman

ENGAGEMENTS

■ Prof. P. Lal reads Satyaki's rout of Duhsasana in the 352nd session of his English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at G.D. Birla Sabhagar; 11-00

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata

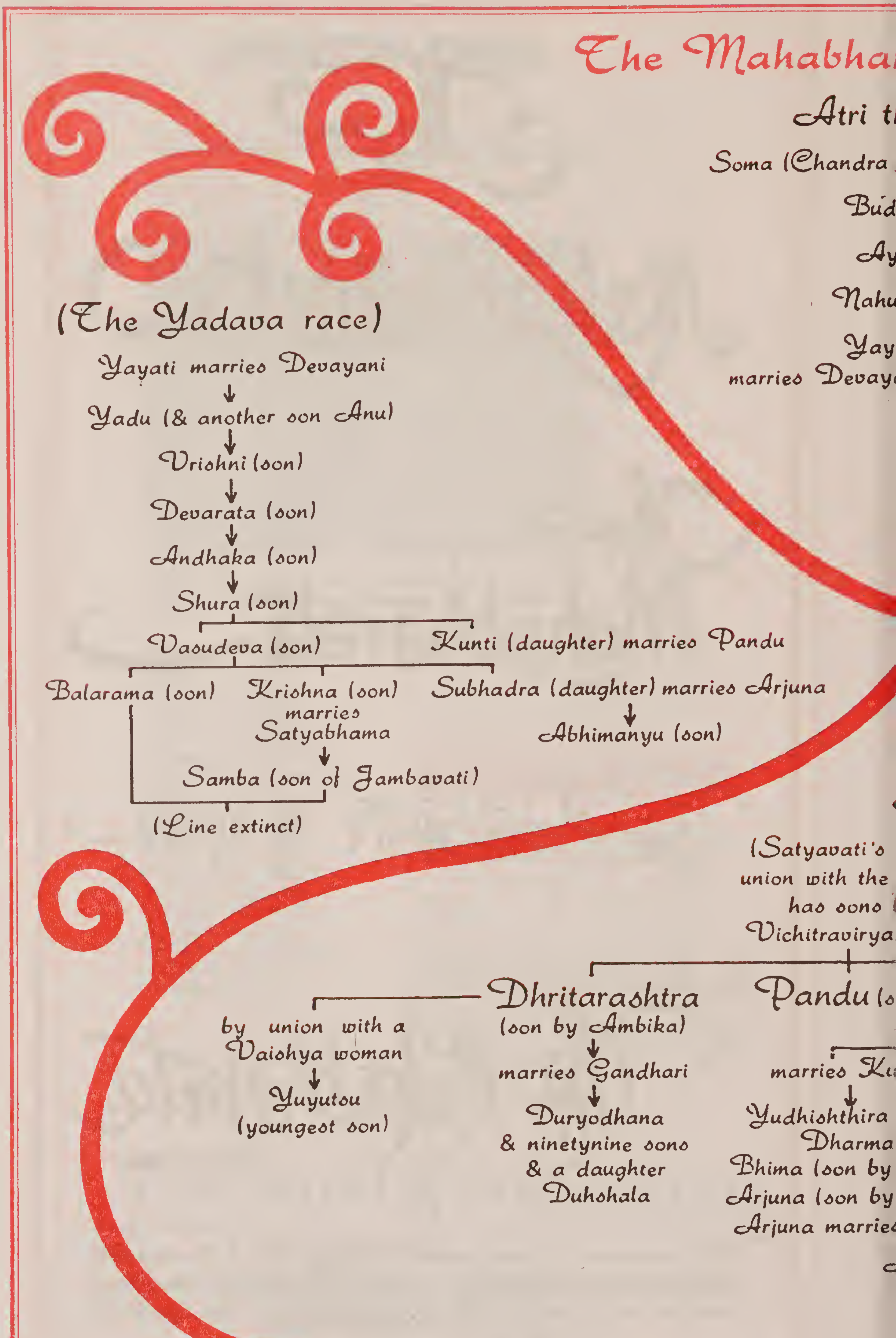
The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

TRANSCREATED BY P. LAL

The Mahabharata

OF VYASA

The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.



Sketch by Srimati Lal

a Family Tree

Rishi

du) the Moon

n)

)

on)

n)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

e-marriage union with Ganga

↓

Bhishma (son)

asa
her pre-marriage
Parashara; Vyasa
two widows of
ika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
married Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

(Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and

Madri

↓

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

)

)

)

adra

nyu (son) marries Uttara

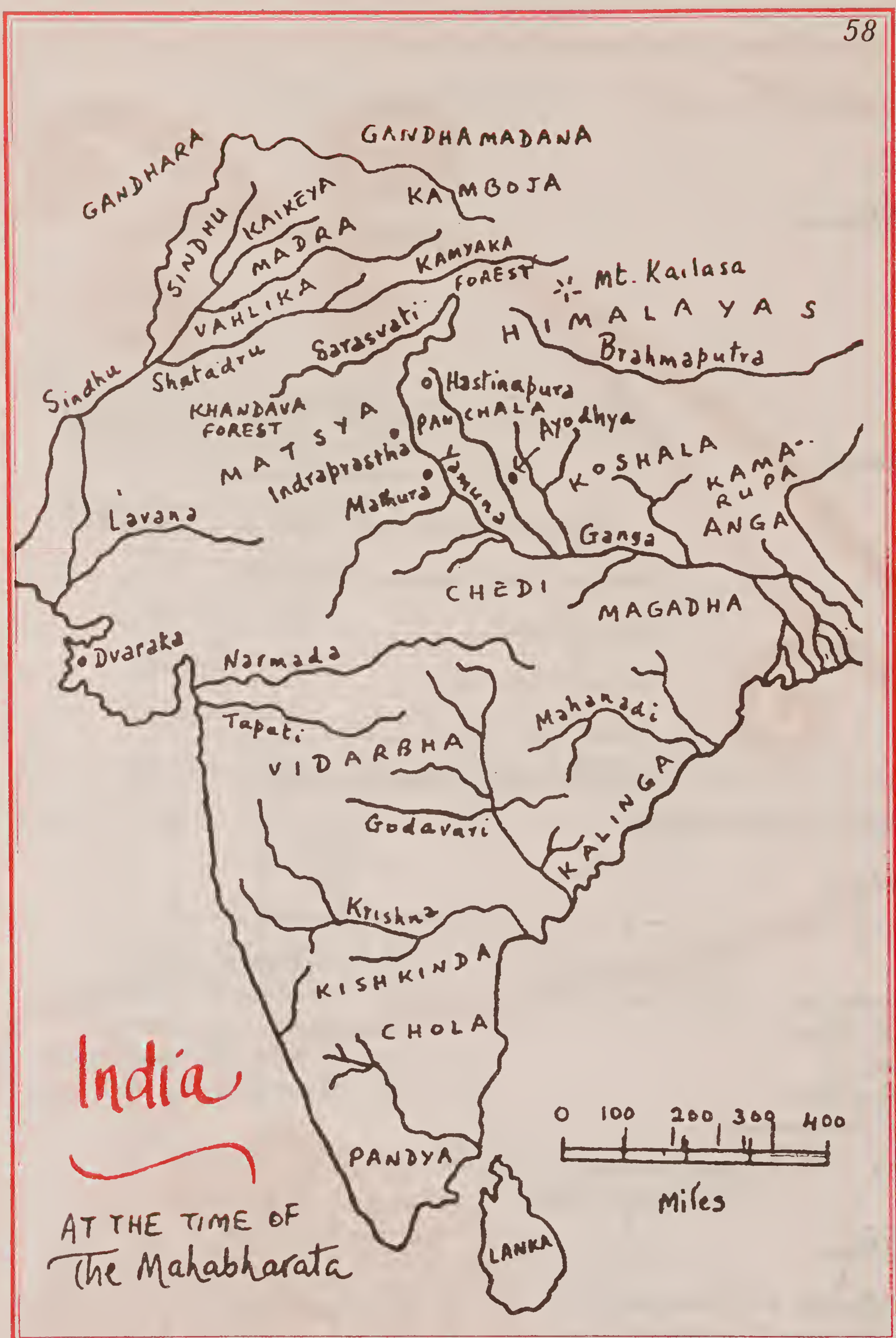
↓

Parikshit (son)

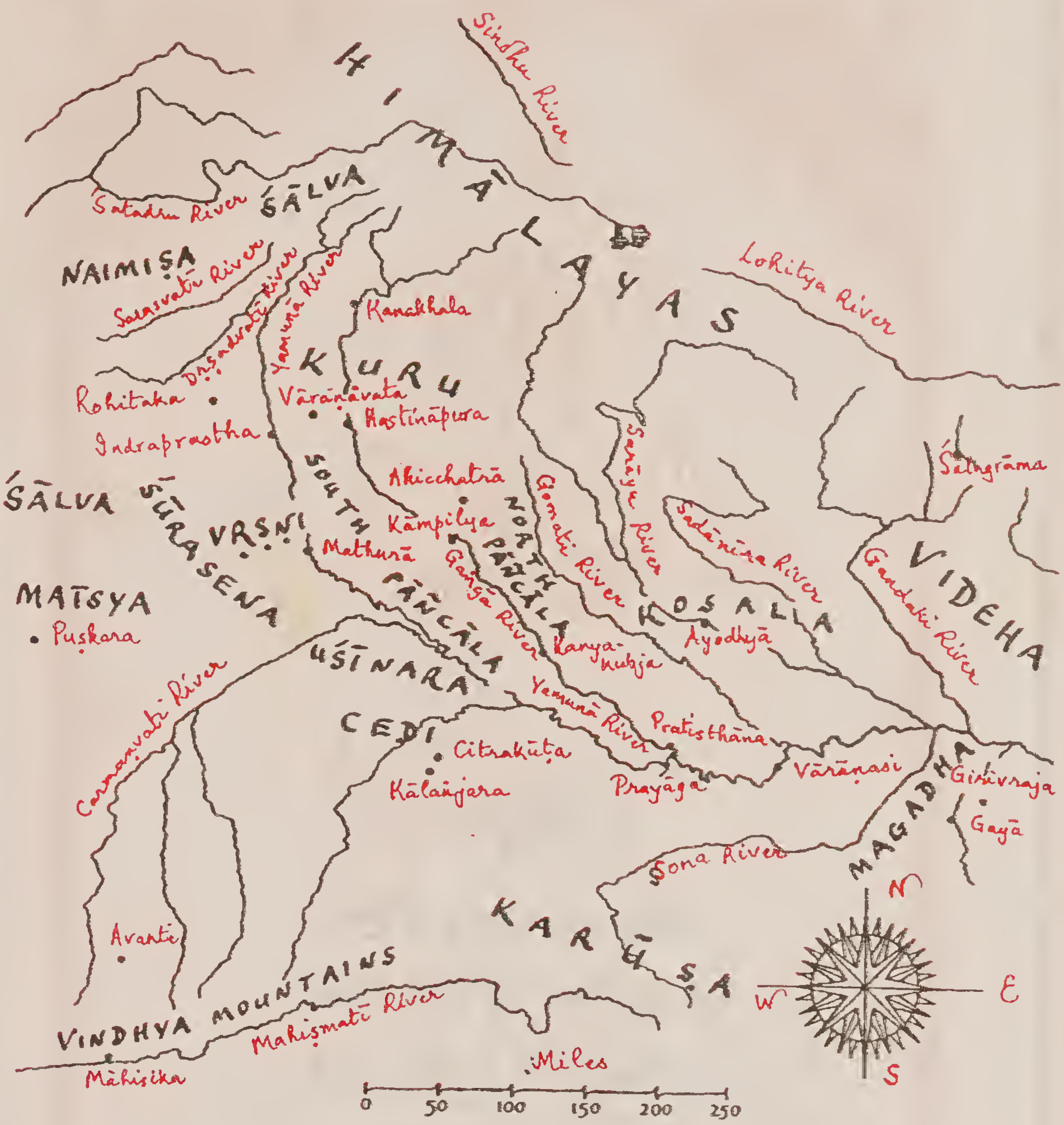
↓

Janamejaya (son)





Sketch by P. Lal



Ārya-varta
at the time of the Mahābhārata

Sketch by P. Lal based on *The Historical Atlas of South Asia*
[University of Minnesota]

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the message of the epic,
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WRITERS WORKSHOP
Indian Creative Writing in English

WRITERS WORKSHOP was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation from India, the Commonwealth, and other English-using territories. Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700 045, India, and diffusion done through a series of Bird-logo books issued under the WORKSHOP imprint. Since October 1999 the Sunday one-hour morning session is devoted to a śloka-by-śloka reading by P. Lal at the Sanskriti Sagar Library in Calcutta, of his complete English transcreation of the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa, planned to continue for the next ten years, till the epic is completed. Since 1971 the WORKSHOP has laid increasing emphasis on its publishing programme. A complete, descriptive 90-page illustrated checklist of over 3000 books and cassettes is available for Rs. 20.

The WORKSHOP is non-profit and non-political. It involves writers who are sympathetic to the ideals and principles commonly accepted as embodied in creative writing; it is concerned with practice not theorising, helpful criticism not iconoclasm, the torch not the sceptre. Not impressed by desire for quick fame and money by pandering to the increasing sexual over-permissiveness and explicitness in 20th and 21st century "literature", and religious intolerance and hatred masquerading as "freedom in creative writing", WRITERS WORKSHOP upholds the primacy of stable ethical and moral values, and prefers writing that enshrines humanist principles, which are of special relevance in the context of the multi-cultural historical palimpsest of the civilisation known as India.

Further details are available from the Director, P. Lal, at the WORKSHOP address: 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700045, India (Phone: 2417-4325, 2417-2683 and 3095-9727 E-mail :profsky@cal.vsnl.net.in) Browse in the WW Book Nook Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2006. I am three score and eighteen. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3200 separate titles in its checklist (published over 48 years 1958-2006), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

For more information, browse in the WW IndEngLit Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

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years